

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 092106Z APR 76

FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7428

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

UNCLAS MONTREAL 458

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CA

SUBJ: MONTREAL REACTION TO QUEBEC BACK-TO-WORK LEGISLATION  
FOR TEACHERS

REF: QUEBEC 73

1. AMCONSUL QUEBEC WILL REPORT ON FINAL READING ON APRIL 8 OF QUEBEC'S BILL 23, THE SPECIAL LEGISLATION TO BAR WORK DISRUPTIONS BY TEACHERS FOR 80 DAYS.
2. MONTREAL PRESS REACTION OF APRIL 9 IS SPLIT AND RANGES FROM GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION TO STRONG OPPOSITION. BOTH MAJOR ANGLOPHONE DAILIES, THE GAZETTE AND THE STAR, ACCUSE THE GOQ OF OVERACTION AND OF UNDERMINING THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS BY MOVING BEFORE ALL EFFORTS TO REACH AGREEMENT BY NEGOTIATION WERE EXHAUSTED. BOTH PAPERS FIND THE CONDITIONS IMPOSED ON TEACHERS REPRESSIVE AND NEITHER SEES LEGISLATION AS PROVIDING BASIS FOR HONORABLE SETTLEMENT. THE GAZETTE CALLS BILL UNJUSTIFIED AND HARSH AND SAYS GOQ OVER-REACTED IN SITUATION FOR WHICH IT IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE. STAR CALLS BILL THE FINAL EXAMPLE OF THE BAD FAITH SHOWN BY THE GOVERNMENT SINCE THE START OF THE NEGOTIATIONS."

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3. LA PRESSE SEES BILL AS SEVERE AND EVEN ODIIOUS BUT AS SUFFI-

CIENTLY WELL BALANCED AND FLEXIBLE TO OFFER THE POSSIBILITY OF AN HONORABLE SETTLEMENT. LA PRESSE, AS DOES LE DEVOIR, FINDS JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE LEGISLATION IN THE NEED TO PROTECT STUDENTS FROM THE RISK OF LOSING CREDIT FOR THIS SCHOOL YEAR. LE DEVOIR, WHICH ON APRIL 8 EDITORIALIZED THAT THE GOQ HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO INTRODUCE THE LEGISLATION, APPROVES LAST-MINUTE AMENDMENTS WHICH SOFTENED THE PENALTIES IMPOSED BY THE BILL BUT FINDS SOME OF THESE STILL EXCESSIVE. LE JOUR'S EDITORIAL TAKES A FIRM STAND AGAINST THE BILL AND IN GENERAL AGAINST ALL SPECIAL LEGISLATION IN LABOR CASES.

4. SENTIMENT AMONG TEACHERS AND TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS SEEMS STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF DEFYING THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS CASE. MOST ASSOCIATIONS HAVE SCHEDULED GENERAL MEETINGS TO DECIDE WHAT STAND THEY WILL ADOPT. AS A RESULT, FOR EXAMPLE, ALL CLASSES UNDER THE PROTESTANT SCHOOL BOARD OF GREATER MONTREAL WERE EFFECTIVELY CANCELLED ON APRIL 9. THE HEAD OF MONTREAL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION IS REPORTED AS ADVOCATING MORE ROTATING STRIKES. RADIO AND PRESS INTERVIEWS WITH SAMPLING OF TEACHERS INDICATE MOST READY TO RISK PENALTIES RATHER THAN OBEY THE LAW. SOME PARENTS HAVE DECIDED TO SUPPORT THE TEACHERS BY WITHDRAWING THEIR CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL UNTIL AFTER EASTER BREAK. ONE U.S. CITIZEN TEACHING IN QUEBEC PHONED THE CONGEN, ON HER BEHALF AND THAT OF OTHER AMERICAN COLLEAGUES, TO INQUIRE ABOUT PENALTIES, INCLUDING POSSIBLE DEPORTATION, IN EVENT SHE OR HER TEACHER ASSOCIATION DECIDED NOT TO OBEY BILL 23 AND NOT TO PAY FINES.  
HARPER

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